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LETTER DATED 20 SEPTEMBER 1993 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Despite the steps taken by the Security Council and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the situation in Abkhazia, the Republic of Georgia, still remains near catastrophic.

In this connection, I have the honour to transmit to you an appeal by the Chairman of the Parliament, Head of State of the Republic of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, to all the friends of my homeland, dated 20 September 1993.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this appeal as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter P. CHKHEIDZE
Permanent Representative
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary

Annex

[Original: Russian]

Appeal by Eduard Shevardnadze: To all the friends of my homeland

I am appealing to you from besieged Sukhumi, not knowing if my words will ever reach you. Fighting is taking place only a few blocks away from the building in which my friends and I are located. Whatever happens, I shall not leave this city which, once again, has fallen victim to deceit and treachery. I shall not leave the residents of Sukhumi, who have been subjected to suffering and deprivation in their own city, which has been left to the mercy of a brutal, inhuman force. That force is shelling residential areas. In the past two days, 40 civilians have died and 353 have been seriously wounded. Since the beginning of the war, 2,031 people have been killed and 5,802 seriously wounded.

How often have I asked myself: "what is happening? For what purpose?"

The Gudauta leaders say that they are fighting for freedom and for the right to live in their native land. But 240,000 Georgians, whose roots in this soil go back centuries, are yearning for that very same freedom and are seeking to uphold that very same right. This land has been a cradle to both Georgians and Abkhaz.

We did not intend to expel anyone, but the criminal intent of those who sponsor the Gudauta clique has led to the forced exile of 150,000 Georgians who today are dying of hunger and illness in Russian and Georgian cities. With them, thousands of Abkhaz, Russians and Armenians have been driven from their homes.

We did not intend to conquer anyone. After all, how could we subjugate our own citizens and occupy our own land, the centre of our ancient culture and statehood? We sought only to safeguard the sovereignty of the Republic, defend its vital arteries and put an end to sabotage and terror. This we wished to do with the knowledge, consent and participation of our Abkhaz fellow countrymen, and the leaders of the Abkhaz "Vendée" were aware of this. They knew that the territory of the autonomous republic was being used by bandits, aggressors and terrorists as a base for subversive activities against the Republic of Georgia, and they tolerated them, seeking to use this card to their own advantage.

They succeeded. And that success was achieved with the direct support and complicity of those forces in Russia and our country that have conspired to "quarter" Georgia. Now that the actions of the anti-national forces in Georgia itself, the "spontaneous" (as they say in Gudauta) violation of the Sochi agreement, the steps taken by some of the highest-ranking military personnel of the Russian Federation and the policy of the Russian Parliament have all coincided, we have every right to claim that this has been a well-coordinated and well-orchestrated collective blow. I want the world to realize that Abkhazia is the arena for the empire's bloody revenge, a "second August", the fuse with which they intend to blow up not only Shevardnadze's Georgia but also Yeltsin's Russia.

There is a logical sequence connecting all the events that led up to the present inferno. On 3 September 1992, we signed the final document in Moscow. The ink was still wet on the paper when the document was trampled by the boots of the mercenaries who stormed defenceless Gagra. On 14 May 1993, we agreed on a cease-fire, after which Sukhumi was attacked from land, sea and air and an assault force, armed to the teeth, invaded Ochamchire district. As a result, Sukhumi was blockaded. Finally, for the third time, having put faith in the Russian Federation's peacemaking mission and its role as guarantor and mediator, we concluded the agreement of 27 July 1993 and, once again, we were betrayed. The guns that, under the agreement, should have been withdrawn, resumed their thunder, the engines of combat equipment that was to be dismantled roared back into life, and the irregulars who had supposedly been disarmed joined the assault. Once again we have to face a bitter fact: the guarantor of the agreement either did not wish, or was unable, to discharge that duty.

My talks with General Grachev, Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation, yielded no results. Although in themselves they were constructive, later that same day they were disavowed by statements by several subordinates of the Russian Minister of Defence and by the decision of the Russian Parliament.

Neither have there been any positive results from the resolutions of the Security Council and the repeated, strongly worded statements by the Secretary-General.

I do not doubt the sincerity of efforts by the President of the Russian Federation to promote a settlement to the conflict; in this, however, he is impeded by the same force which is trying to crush us.

That notwithstanding, I appeal once again to Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin, to the United Nations Security Council and Mr. Boutros-Ghali, to the entire progressive and democratic Russian nation and to all the peoples of the world: do not allow this monstrous crime to be committed, halt the execution of a small country and save my homeland and my people from perishing in the fires of imperial reaction. The world must not condone the annihilation of one of its most ancient nations, the creator of a great culture and heir to exalted spiritual traditions.

Boris Nikolaevich, you did a great deal for Georgia in the hour of its most arduous ordeals. Perhaps the time has now come for you to speak out boldly in its defence. You will be speaking also in defence of your own Russia, for our peoples have always shared a common destiny.

I count on the help of the friendly Ukrainian people and its President, with whom I have signed a treaty on mutual assistance. I also pin my hopes on the solidarity of the peoples and republics of the former Soviet Union, of our historical neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran. I await help from our friends in the West.

I thank all those who have extended and who will extend a strong and friendly hand to Georgia, which is being forced into the abyss of annihilation.

In my aspiration to end the cold war and to bring down the walls of division and alienation, I fought for the freedom and independence of all

peoples, little suspecting that it would only be after the major threats to the existence of humankind has been removed that my own nation would face its darkest hour.

Perhaps there will be some who say that this is a cry of despair. No, if it is a cry, it is a cry from the heart, from my own heart and that of my people, and I want it to be heard. For humankind can never be content, can never enjoy the blessings of the world in tranquillity so long as one nation, albeit the very smallest, is threatened with annihilation.

I am writing this at 3 a.m. Shells are falling on the city; 1,500 homes have been destroyed. There is no water, no bread, no electricity and hopes are fading. The shelling continues. A moment ago several shells hit a maternity hospital, in which there were newborn infants and their mothers.

I am not bidding you farewell, I do not wish to say farewell. May God send you peace and happiness.

Eduard Shevardnadze

Sukhumi

18 September 1993